



PARAMOUNT RANCH



merican Cinema plays a starring role in the cultural life of the United States and the world. Since before the advent of “talking pictures,” Paramount Ranch has served as a setting for hundreds of cinematic productions.

Lights! Camera! Action!...In 1927, Paramount Pictures purchased 2,400 acres of the old Rancho Las Virgenes for use as a “movie ranch.” For 25 years, a veritable who’s who of Hollywood practiced their craft at Paramount Ranch including director Cecil B. DeMille and actors Clara Bow, Gary Cooper and Claudette Colbert. The diverse landscape was the real star of the show. It offered film makers the freedom to create distant locales such as colonial Massachusetts in “The Maid of Salem,” ancient China in “The Adventures of Marco Polo,” a South Seas island in “Ebb Tide” and numerous western locations including San Francisco in “Wells Fargo.” The art of illusion was mastered in these films.

Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch...The “golden era” of movie making at Paramount Ranch came to an end when changes to the studio system prompted Paramount Pictures to sell the ranch. In 1953, the southeast portion was purchased by William Hertz, an ardent fan of movie westerns. As a tribute to the history of the ranch, he built a permanent western town on the site utilizing the old prop storage sheds left behind by Paramount Pictures. As a result of his efforts, the area found renewed life as a film location when television companies began producing westerns here such as “The Cisco Kid” and “Dick Powell’s Zane Grey Theatre.” In 1955, Bill Hertz sold the ranch.

Ride Off Into the Sunset...From 1955 to 1980, film making continued even though the ranch changed ownership several times. After purchasing the property in 1980, the National Park Service took steps to revitalize the old movie ranch. From 1991 to 1998, the park was used as the setting for the television show, “Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman.” Whether watching any filming that may be occurring or exploring the area, experience for yourself the drama and grandeur that the Santa Monica Mountains have to offer.



National Park Service
Santa Monica Mountains
National Recreation Area
401 West Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks CA 91360

Visitor Center 805-370-2301
In emergency: dial 911

Information & Safety

Water from streams is not safe to contact or drink due to possible contamination or the presence of the giardia protozoan.

Natural and historic features are protected by law and may not be collected.

Dogs on leash are allowed on designated trails, access roads and developed areas.

Fire is a constant danger. Campfires are prohibited. Smoking is not permitted while traveling on trails.

Bicyclists must ride courteously and yield to hikers and horseback riders. **Hikers** must yield to horseback riders. The lawn areas are closed to bicycle and horse traffic.

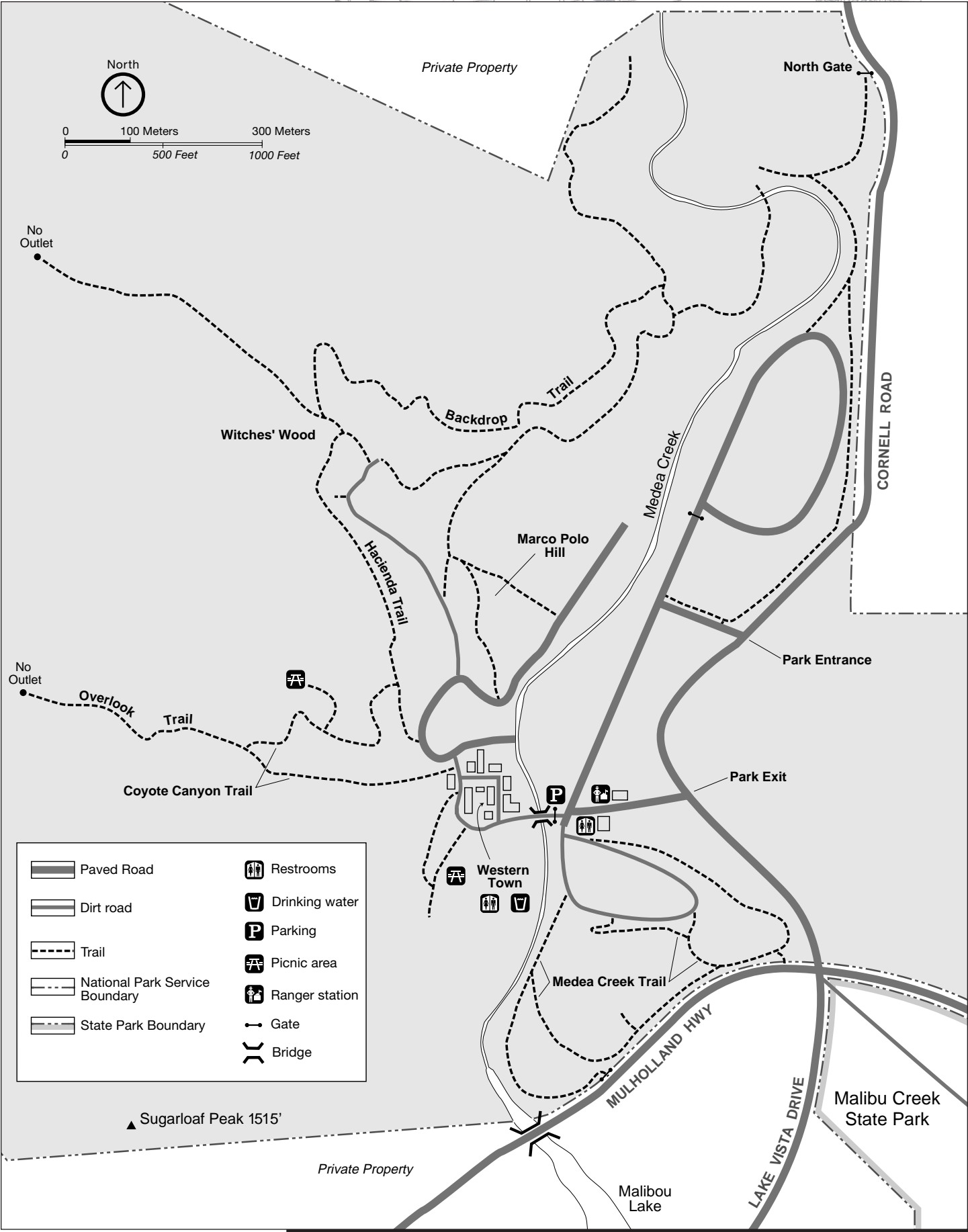
Trail closures will be in effect during and following significant rainfall to protect park resources. Trails will be re-opened when dry enough to sustain public use.

Stay on established trails and avoid rattlesnakes, ticks and poison oak.

Wasps and bees are plentiful during the summer months. Please cover foods and sweet beverages while picnicking.

Firearms are not allowed in National Park Service areas.

Vehicles are restricted to designated roads and parking areas.



Trails

Coyote Canyon Trail 0.75 mile round trip, easy—From the west side of the Western Town, the trail (open to hikers and equestrians) follows a small chaparral covered canyon and climbs a small knoll overlooking the valley. A short spur trail will take you to a picnic spot with a view.

Medea Creek Trail 0.75 mile round trip, easy—Begins at the southern end of the parking area. The trail (open to hikers and equestrians) loops through streamside and oak woodland habitats.

Overlook Trail 0.50 mile one way, moderate—The trail (open to hikers and equestrians) climbs up from Coyote Canyon to a view of the mountains to the west.

Bits of History

At Paramount Ranch, the National Park Service maintains a connection between past movie productions and place names. **Marco Polo Hill** is named for the set built there circa 1936. The **Hacienda Trail** leads past the sites where Paramount built a Hacienda set in the late 1920's, and CBS built a homestead for "Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman" in 1995. **Witches Wood** received its name from the fortune tellers who set up booths each year for the Renaissance Pleasure Faire during the 1970's and 1980's. The **Backdrop Trail** recognizes the portion of the ranch that could be used for any type of shot because it had no telephone poles or distinctive features.

Note: Western Town is only a set. Walk carefully on the boardwalks and do not lean or climb on the buildings. Smoking is not allowed on the boardwalks or while traveling on trails.